

Letter No 57.

Friday - July 4th.

Major. T. H. Massey.
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My sweet darling -

I wrote the headings to this letter at 9.0 o'clock & it is now 11.0. 11 is these ruddy air raids, the interval has been spent behind the black-proof walls of my command post. This is the penalty of a full moon. Last night there was one, just after I was nicely asleep in bed. And the night before, just before I went to bed, but that time we were treated to the fine sight of a plane receiving a direct hit, & coming down as a sheet of flame. 11 was one of these Vichy French ones - they are a dirty lot of devils, really.

I am going off tomorrow midday until Sunday evening, to spend a short weekend with Arkin & his family at Nalkanya, about an hour's run from here. I am told it is a very pleasant place. I don't believe I have told you about Arkin. He is a Jewish officer, who was commissioned in March & sent to me for training until his own Company was formed. Now I have a Jewish Sgt whom I have recommended for a commission to fill a vacancy in my Coy. During the time that the Sgt has been waiting for his commission & Arkin has been waiting for his Coy, I have come to like Arkin very much, both as a man & as an officer - the Sgt has been annoying me rather badly; he is too much of a German - a Yek. And so I have managed to arrange with Col Henderson that I keep Arkin, & send the Sgt instead to the other Coy. And there is no doubt at all that this

is a good piece of ² business for me. 12 off 100
Arkin is a very pleasant little man of 28, extremely intelligent, & a hard working & serious officer. In civil life, he was the Town Clerk - an important job in Palestine - of Nattanya. Just two months before joining up, he married the daughter of the Mayor - a good move, I expect! And it is with them I am going to stay. I'm afraid they are going to make rather a splash of entertaining the "Major" - because I nearly had to put it off on Wednesday. Arkin looks terribly disappointed & said that everything was prepared. And his wife telephoned today, when he was out, & spoke to Ben Ami & said all was ready. Oh dear! what a business - I told Arkin not to do anything special for me.

I will write you all about it when I return. And now I must go & sleep. Goodnight, precious sweet heart. Dear kisses to you XXXX.

Monday - 7 July. Well, darling one, I'm back from my week end, & a very pleasant & interesting one too. I must tell you about it all while the going is good - tomorrow or the next day. I must have a letter from you, then there will probably be so much to reply to & talk about, & this will never be done.

The week end was spent at the Mayor's house, & Arkin's wife is the sister of the Mayor's wife, not his daughter. His name is Ben-Ami, & he & his wife live in the largest house in Nattanya, on the highest point.

overlooking everything & everybody else. It was a really lovely modern house, full of rich modern furniture, a few rather garish things in bad taste, but mainly very well chosen & arranged, many good ideas. It was all very interesting, because Nattaya is a new place, started from nothing at all in 1929, Ben-Ami in particular, with 2 or 3 friends, is the man who began the whole affair. In 1929, it was just sand & swamp - no soil at all - & highly malarious - Today, it is said to be the healthiest place in Palestine. It is a very flourishing small town & a very lovely place. So it is really his town, & he proudly told me that it has a future. It is really very courageous, the way in which such people pioneer such a project. The swamps & malaria were dealt with by draining & drenching, & by the liberal planting of eucalyptus trees, which grow quickly & without care, & have the property of drying ground & driving away the mosquito. And then flowers & grass & vegetables grow well in sand, providing the ground is continually watered, when it slowly changes into soil. Every where in Palestine, you see water laid out with these sprinkler things, liberally - that is what saves the situation, the good water supply. From February to October, there is no rain at all, exactly none.

Nattaya is on the sea, from which cliffs rise up, & from Ben-Ami's house it was possible to see Mount

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Carmel in the North, & snow capped Mount Hermon, in Syria, beyond - away inland to the mountains of the Jordan Valley, & Transjordan - & south as far as Jerusalem. Palestine is a peculiar shape, laterally. Mrs was pleasant, charming, good looking & well dressed - Mrs Arkin quite a pretty attractive girl, a young woman. He was about 40, short & somewhat rotund, but not at all Jewish in appearance. And the Ben-Amis have 2 daughters - aged 12 & 14. Pretty pleasant children, but rather too well dressed. That was one thing about all the women, children & grown ups - they appeared in a succession of lovely frocks, but I was not able to gather whether this was normal or mainly for my benefit.

We started off with a magnificent lunch, off a glass topped table, & marvellous cutlery & crockery - one wall of the dining room being entirely covered with an oil painting of the Dead Sea, & that part of the Jordan valley, the Moabite hills beyond - the coloring was gorgeous, if you remember my letters from Jericho. After lunch we all went to our beds & had a rest. & it made me furiously jealous & passionately sad, to think of Arkin & his wife together a few yards away, probably thinking it was a hell of a reunion not having seen each other for 3 weeks. And there was I alone, & 3000 miles away, far alone, & not having seen each other for nine months that very day. It really does peeve me, the way these Jewish officers all

have their wives, take ⁵ it all for granted.

After this we walked down & had a bath. Marvellous
sands & enormous waves, but unfortunately unable to
go in further than up to your waist, the pull was
so bad. In the evening we went to the cinema &
saw a terrible old film called "The Fighting 69", with James
Cagney as a fellow private, Pat O'Brien as the padre
— really terrible. Then to a cafe place, where a great, fat,
Russian woman, sang songs, very badly, in Russian,
Hebrew & Yiddish.

I'm very sleepy, darling. I was up at 5-15 this morning, to
be here for 1-30 & I've had a wearing day, & am
feeling a little bit dead. So I'm just going to have a
drink, read your last letter again, & go to bed. Goodnight
angel darling. Love & kisses to you & Max — & all my
love & loving kisses to you, sweetheart. x x x. H.

Tuesday - July 8th I hope you don't mind this serial letter
method — but as I explained before, I do eventually achieve
a letter by this means, where, otherwise, I should be
wasting my time by not writing to you. Today's
instalment may be very brief, as I have been very much
involved, & am at it again after dinner. I spent the
early part of the morning in arranging the details for
one of my men's divorce. I was just about through with
that, when word came that the wife of one of my
corporals had committed suicide, leaving a one month
old baby behind — a really dreadful affair. It seems
she had been a bad neurotic case for some time,

even before pregnancy, I had jumped out of a window before. The corporal told me all about it when the baby was born - but it was hoped that this would make all the difference to her. But no - she must have been pretty mad, & I feel it is what is known as a happy release. So this morning, I went to see Dr Soloviglik (?) (the little nightingale) whom I have mentioned before, & arranged for the baby, not yet weaned of course, to be taken into a hospital in the meantime. I then collected the corporal, poor little man, & took him to the baby to the hospital. And after dinner I am going to see a Mrs Bar-Rav-Hai - the people I had promised with - & arrange for a proper place for the baby to go & be brought up. After all tragedies, darling, I feel so much for such people, & I could hardly keep my tears back today.

I have now returned, & it is midnight - & there was a 3 hour air raid during last night. So I cannot help being sleepy again. But is all fixed up for the baby, it goes to the best institution in Palestine, in Jerusalem, in two days - the corporal pays £2 a month & the Jewish Welfare Committee the same. So things are as well arranged as possible for the poor man, & I feel I have done my best. Mine is a strange job. Goodnight, Barbara darling. X X X.

Wednesday - 9th July. I have had a letter from my mother today, dated June 9th - the last one I had from her was posted on the 5th May. Enforcing, again.

She sounded very pleased about the baby, but had not had any details about him by then. She said Charles, Dorothy, Mrs. Twine, Miss Farnival, & 'lots of people in Hale', were very pleased about it - but did not mention Aunt Sarah. I am just about to go to the Garrison Cinema & see Diana Wynyard, in 'One more River'. I shall return at 9-30 & go on with this. Not too good a film & very old - I saw it before, maybe we saw it together. In any case, it was much too high falutin for the Crooks, who kept up a tune of raspberries most of the time.

But I must continue about my week end at Nakanya. Before going to bed on Saturday, we had a spot of supper & this included a favourite & traditional Jewish food called gefilte fish - a sort of stuffed fish. Never in all my days have I tasted anything so revolting & foul - I had one bite, was very nearly sick on the spot, & gave up.

On Sunday morning, we breakfasted very pleasantly from hors d'oeuvres things - tomato & cucumber salad, cream cheese, green olives, same kind of fish, & so on: very pleasant - & milk, & tea, & bread & honey. They had rather a good idea in the house - the dining room & kitchen were spacious & grand, & just in between the two, they had a very small room, which they used for breakfast & odd meals. Furnished with just a table, & upholstered benches round two walls, & chairs & a cupboard & drawers in which to keep necessary things.

Afterwards, we went out & looked round some diamond cutting & polishing places, which was quite interesting, but really not much about what to tell you - but I now know how it is done. The most

poor part of the whole business was the flippant & almost-careless way in which they handle them - bunches of 10 or 20 just popped into a scrawly little bit of paper, something scribbled on in pencil, & shoved away in an old cardboard box. Mr Ben-Ami had started this industry - which previously was concentrated in Belgium & Holland. He went there last year, persuaded them that the Nazis really were coming, offered them land in Maltanya, & now the industry is concentrated there & I expect, will remain there. Quite smart work, & I presume he gets his cut out of it all. We then went to a Kibutz nearby, at a place called Mishmar ha Sharan - where we had the ordinary lunch which was really wholesome & good. We were then shown round the fruit gardens. This is going to ~~last~~ you - I'm afraid darling - you must be dying to have really good fruit & plenty of it again - & you told me in one of your letters not to mention orange juice again, or you would swoon away. But I expect you can take it, & maybe you are better off in this way, in Devon. We had had some gargantuan water melon for lunch - & then in the gardens we had various kinds of plums, pears & apples, & saw pomegranates growing. Then we went across to the vineyards, & had enormous bunches of green & black grapes thrust upon us. It was really an orgy, & I wished you could have had some of these lovely things. Oranges are very nearly finished now, though Chaimatzki still manages to bring me a glass full of orange juice at 6-25 each morning. But melons & grapes are in full swing & very cheap, lovely to have. We then went home again

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after effusive thanks, & had another nice lie down on
our beds. And then we went & had tea with the
District Officer. This Government business is a little complicated.
Palestine, as you know I expect, is a mandate from the
League of Nations. At the top, is the High Commissioner.
Then, the country is divided into districts, & each
district has a District Commissioner. In each district, there
are various small towns & large villages, & each of these
has an assistant D.C. And all of them have a District
Officer, who is Jew or Arab according to the village or
town - ~~which~~ it is a mixed population, Jew & Arab,
they have one of each. In the evening, they held a party
for me, & asked the Assistant D.C. of Tulkarm & the
same gentleman for Nazareth, who was staying with him for
the week end. It was rather a dull evening. And in the
morning we returned. But I enjoyed the week end
very much. It was good to get away from here & relax.

By the way, my mother put Max's birth in the
Manchester Guardian, which was kind & thoughtful of her,
& will inform various people. She also said Bill Williams
had telephoned, for your address & mine to write to us.

Once again the Army have got a move on & acted
on my advice, & my new second in command arrived
yesterday. And once again, I wished that the Association
had behaved like this. This time it is a man called
Salaman, who is Regular Army. He was a Corporal in the
Black Watch - then came to the P.R.C.D. as a Sgt
Instructor - then went to an Officers Cadet Training
Unit - & was commissioned into the Buffs as a
full lieutenant. He is 24 - younger than I expected -
& he seems alright, but I do not know anything
of him yet. I hope to God he will be O.K.,

I cannot go on like this. I am told I am already
known as the second in command killer.
I am enclosing another of the snaps - negative & an
enlargement. I kept it back because Chonky
wanted one of Peter. And Peter took some last
week end, which I shall be able to send on in
my next letter.

The concert last Wednesday was mediocre. There was
no conductor - a tradition for the last concert of the
season. You can probably imagine the result -
marvellously well described playing, but that was all -
no feeling, character or individuality. They played
Schubert's unfinished symphony, Stravinsky's Pulcinella
Suite - a strange piece of music; there was a Kravtch
movement in the middle which was so strident & ugly -
unexpected - it gave me a stomach ache, literally.
And then Balero, which was well done. But then
I should have been a conductor. I suggested that the
next concert, they should all play standing on
one leg!

To bed now. Syria has asked for Annie's today.
The U.S.A. are going to Iceland - Russia seems
to be doing pretty well. Oh darling - can it
end soon? I follow events so closely & with only
one idea in my head. To be with my sweet
darling again & begin life again.
I love you so much & always. Barbara
X P P X Harry

BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION



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Mrs. H. Massey.

Carse land.

Pillary Hill.

Noss Mayo.

Plymouth.

